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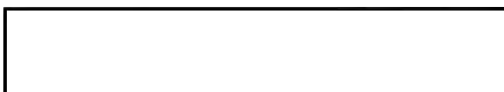
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# STAFF NOTES:

## Soviet Union Eastern Europe

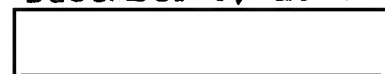
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**SOVIET UNION - EASTERN EUROPE**

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Polish Congress Begins

Edward Gierek kicked off the Polish party's seventh congress Monday with a recitation of Poland's economic and political progress since 1971.

He emphasized that the people are now living better than ever before and that the party will continue to seek further improvements in the living standard. For the Polish consumer, Gierek had the welcome news that price increases on basic food items will be delayed well into next year and that overcoming difficulties in meat supplies is one of the party's most important goals. Gierek said that the price policy for 1976-1980 would ensure increases in real wages.

On internal political matters, Gierek repeated the standard formulations on the need to increase the militancy and effectiveness of ideological activity. He also proposed that the period between party congresses be extended to five years and said that several constitutional amendments were needed to reflect the socialist nature of the state.

Gierek paid the requisite tribute to Moscow, saying that the Soviet Union is the "leading force of the international Communist movement." He called for expansion of cooperation within COMECON, claimed that "good conditions" were shaping up for a European Communist Party Conference, and said the Polish party favors the idea of a new world conference.

Soviet party leader Brezhnev is present along with most East European party leaders; the notable exception is Romania's Ceausescu. Brezhnev will address the congress on Tuesday.

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Dissident Trials as Backdrop  
to Sakharov's Nobel Award?

Two leading dissidents close to Nobel Peace Prize winner Andrey Sakharov reportedly may go on trial this week. The timing is probably not accidental. By having the trials overlap the date on which Sakharov was to have received the award in Oslo (December 10), the regime would underscore that publicity surrounding Sakharov's case will not deter it from enforcing domestic controls.

Dissident sources say that the trial of biologist Sergey Kovalev will probably begin December 9 in Vilnius, Lithuania, where he has been detained since his arrest a year ago. Although Kovalev is charged with "anti-Soviet agitation" stemming from his alleged support of underground Lithuanian Catholic activities, his former role in the illegal Moscow chapter of Amnesty International and his relationship with Sakharov probably contribute to his travails.

The connection is even clearer in the case of Andrey Tverdokhlebov, the former secretary of Amnesty International's Moscow branch and a co-founder of Sakharov's "democratic movement." The trial of Tverdokhlebov, who was arrested in April, has reportedly been postponed several times; Sakharov now expects that it will be held this week, or "soon."

Sakharov has repeatedly protested the detention of his two colleagues, and in a gesture of defiance, last month formally invited them among others to the Oslo Nobel award ceremony which he himself has been prevented from attending. By holding the trials of the two this week, the regime would be making its own strong counter-stature to Sakharov and his allies at home and abroad.

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Although the regime has not foreclosed its option of expelling Sakharov from the USSR at any time, there is no sign that he will be permitted--or forced--to leave before the award ceremony. His wife, who has been in the West for medical treatment and whom Sakharov delegated to receive his prize, has a Soviet re-entry visa valid until December 20. Both Sakharov and his wife remain anxious, however, that the regime may bar her return home at the last moment. Far from keeping his head down, however, Sakharov again this year led some 70 other dissidents in the annual human rights vigil on December 5 (Constitution Day) in Moscow's Pushkin Square.

Meanwhile, the USSR's other Nobel prize winner, establishment economist Leonid Kantorovich, is already in Stockholm, where on December 10 he will share this year's economics prize with US scientist Koopmans. Kantorovich's work on optimal use of resources has been reformist by Soviet standards, but his public politics are clearly orthodox; in a Stockholm interview last Sunday he referred to the USSR's "perfect, socialist system."

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